

SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

MINUTES of the APRIL 28, 2020 POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

Voting Members

Brian Schultz, Chair
Neil Burke
Joe Driscoll
Odean Dyer
Jerrin George
Mark Jackson
Casey Jordan
Dan Kwasnowski
Heather Lamendola
Rob Simpson
David Smith

Organization

Central New York Regional Transportation Authority
City of Syracuse
City of Syracuse Common Council
Onondaga County
NYS Thruway Authority
CNY Regional Planning & Development Board
Onondaga County Legislature
Onondaga County Planning Board
Syracuse Planning Commission
CenterState CEO
NYS Department of Transportation

Also Attending

David Bottar
Carlos Gonzalez
Mark Frechette
Mary Robison
Jared Shepard
Ray Tomczak

CNY Regional Planning & Development Board
Federal Highway Administration
NYS Department of Transportation
City of Syracuse
CenterState CEO
Federal Transit Administration

SMTC Staff

James D'Agostino, Mario Colone, Andrew Frasier, Meghan Vitale, and Patricia Wortley

BUSINESS MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Schultz called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m., via a Zoom Video Conference. Ms. Wortley took roll call of the members participating.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Chairperson inquired if there were any changes to the December 12, 2019 minutes. Hearing none, the Chairperson called for a motion.

Mr. Smith moved and Mr. Kwasnowski seconded approval of the minutes. Following roll call of the members, the motion carried unanimously.

3. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

A. UPWP STATUS REPORT AND AGENCY STATUS REPORT

Mr. D'Agostino gave an overview of the SMTC's activities while the majority of staff works remotely. The final 2019-2020 UPWP Status Report was provided via e-mail to the Committee. Staff wrapped up the program year on March 31. Our new program year began April 1. Staff has begun work on new projects and has started scoping on new projects. Project ramp-ups are slow due to the current situation. Data collection efforts for the projects will be different.

Mr. D'Agostino is working in the office daily and is there to assist members.

Today's agenda is in regard to an I-81 TIP Amendment. We do have five completed projects to present to the committees. The next time we meet, we will have the completed projects on the agenda.

B. UPDATE ON THE I-81 VIADUCT PROJECT FROM THE NYS DOT

Mr. Smith stated that the DOT is certainly part of the response to COVID-19 and has been assisting other state agencies. All DOT staff continue to work to keep things going. On the construction side, everyone is well aware that construction continues on the highway system. There is a large program on both the state and local levels. He stated the Fairgrounds nighttime road closures are going on this week to set steel for the ramp out of the Orange Lot. The work is going well and is on schedule. Regarding the Empire State Trail, the Erie Blvd construction is well underway as is the pedestrian bridge over 481. Work will be completed at the end of this year.

Paving on I-81 North from Cicero to Central Square will take place this summer. The Route 5 and 92 paving project from DeWitt to Manlius will get started in May.

Mr. Frechette stated the preliminary DEIS was released in the springtime of 2019. The No Build and Viaduct alternatives were carried through as well as the Community Grid. They have dismissed the tunnel concept. Most of 2019 was spent on public engagement. Around 1,000 people attended the June 19 public meeting. It was very educational for the public and the project team as well. They held 11 neighborhood meetings. The met in LaFayette, Camillus and had different meetings in the City of Syracuse. They held multiple stakeholder meetings including many of the agencies participating in this call. They received over 1,000 comments on the project. Good public outreach leads to positive changes in the alternative to be implemented. This has been seen in the past. Ultimately, the goal through public outreach is to make the alternatives better before they get to the construction phases. They continued to refine the three remaining alternatives.

They heard a lot from the public. One of the biggest items, which always comes up, is jobs. It was unfortunate that a jobs table meeting was supposed to occur in March. Other things that came out of the analysis highlights: Community Grid change in travel patterns affecting business – additional economic analysis; Exit 3 along 481 – flow of traffic from Route 5 to 481 and reversely; and Right-of-Way (ROW) was a big thing - conversations at the individual level about ingresses and strip taking outside personal homes. They released documentation that showed all properties being impacted. Other topics included, noise, air quality, protecting historical significance - Wilson Park always comes up, environmental justice, and construction implementation. They are able to get into talking more about the implications of construction.

Some of the signs for COVID-19 are very optimistic for CNY. There has been a lot of conversation about unpausing the process and doing it in a way that is healthy. He thinks the next big public steps going forward are to release the document and to have a public federal aid hearing. There are strict time frames for this. They are looking forward to further engagement.

Mr. Driscoll would like a separate committee meeting with the Common Council. He inquired if we are all in a holding pattern with the DEIS until you can go forward with public meetings. Mr. Frechette stated they have talked about meeting with the Common Council. Stakeholder engagement is extremely important. It is hard to predict what is going to happen next month, and in June and July. The release of the DEIS does have a time frame for a public hearing. As soon as the Department can get together with the Council and begin engaging the public they will. Mr.

Driscoll will follow-up on the City meeting in the future, He provided his thoughts on New York on Pause.

Mr. Driscoll inquired what having the Grid as the preferred choice does at this time. Mr. Frechette believes that Mr. Driscoll's item with the Council can be addressed via a Zoom call. They have had conversations with their federal partners on public involvement. There will be more to come on that. Mr. D'Agostino stated until a DEIS is officially released the other options have to stay on the table. Mr. Frechette stated that have to be vetted equally. He stated that the Viaduct did meet the criteria.

Mr. Driscoll inquired if there is an absolute hard date that NYSDOT is aiming for. Mr. Frechette stated that they want to move forward with the project when it is safe to move forward in that engagement. They have to manage moving forward smartly. This is a big priority for the Department. They want to work with the Community to get it right and get the right solution.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Smith and Mr. Frechette for the information they presented.

4. **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

5. **NEW BUSINESS**
A. **TIP AMENDMENT**

Mr. D'Agostino stated that the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) is in need of the following amendment:

Change in Cost:

PIN 350160 (I-81 VIADUCT, CITY OF SYRACUSE, ONONDAGA COUNTY). The NYSDOT is proposing to add funds in Federal Fiscal Years 19/20 and 20/21 to the previously obligated Preliminary Design phase, utilizing \$4,000,000 and \$9,000,000 of NHPP federal funds respectively to continue analysis of economic, environmental and social impacts. The compensating offset is being provided by funds from outside the SMTC planning area.

Mr. Frechette stated that most important thing is that they are adding design funding from the statewide funding, not from the sub-allocations given to Central New York. Mr. Frechette reviewed the dates of the current TIP, approved in 2019. He gave an overview of the project phases included in the STIP. The STIP needs to be fiscally constrained by fund and by year. This is the yearly commitment that the federal government has with every state in the nation. They will need to come back to the Policy Committee for future funding for the other phases of the project. The I-81 project falls into the statewide significant category. The I-81 project is not competing on the same platforms of other TIP projects in the area. The TIP allocation to Central New York would not fund the I-81 project. It would take multiple years. If it had to be funded out of sub-allocations, no other projects would be done in the area.

The TIP adjustment shows the money back to the Planning Study that was done between the Department and the SMTC. In 2013, Commissioner MacDonald added the funding showing in 13/14 and 14/15. This will add funding to the next two years to provide the necessary funds to carry them through to Design Approval. The funding will keep the project going forward to get them to design approval. At this stage, if they decide to go with a Design Build contract they can proceed right to the Construction Phases. This is the funding necessary to carry the funding to get them to the next step.

Mr. D'Agostino stated that this is non-competitive monies; this is from New York State Main Office funding.

Mr. Simpson moved and Mr. Dyer seconded a motion to approve the TIP Amendment. Following roll call of the members, the motion carried unanimously.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. D'Agostino inquired if there were any public comments. Mr. Frasier stated that the YouTube stream does operate at a delay. No comments were received regarding the agenda items.

7. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 1:34 p.m.